



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

KEVIN M. BURKE
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THOMAS P. LEONARD
DEPUTY STATE FIRE MARSHAL

For Immediate Release: December 7, 2007
Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3380

Candle Safety Awareness Day is A Bright Idea
Burn Candles Inside a Circle of Safety

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan said, "There have been several recent fires involving candles, and so practicing candle safety is a bright idea as we recognize Candle Safety Awareness Day on Monday, December 10." He added, "The most important safety tip I can give people is to blow out your candles before going to bed or leaving the room where they are burning."

Candle Fires Can Ruin the Holidays

The Legislature created the second Monday in December as Candle Safety Awareness Day. Some of the days with the most candle fires over the past five years are quickly approaching. Marshal Coan said, "We are now in the middle of the winter holiday season. Our statistics show that during the past five years, six of the top 10 days of candle fires during the year, fall between December 1st and January 6th. Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Day are three of the top four days when candle fires occur in Massachusetts."

Smoke Alarms Save Lives

Coan said, "Regularly test your smoke alarms and consider installing smoke alarms inside the bedrooms that do not already have them. Smoke alarms combined with a practiced home escape plan have proven to save lives."

Candles Caused 14 Deaths in Past 5 Years

During the past five years (2002 – 2006) candles were still responsible for 1,010 fires, 14 civilian deaths, 133 civilian injuries, 93 fire service injuries and \$26 million in damages. The average dollar loss per fire was \$25,848. In 2006 alone, there were 178 candle fires reported to the MA Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS). These fires caused seven deaths (4 were at a religious social club fire on July 21 in Fall River), 41 civilian injuries, 19 fire service injuries, and \$6.2 million in estimated property losses.

"In 2006, seven people died in four separate candle fires. The open flame of a candle can quickly ignite nearby combustibles such as curtains, blankets, sheets, decorations, or newspapers and magazines," said Coan.

Administrative Services • Hazardous Materials Response
Massachusetts Firefighting Academy • Office of the State Fire Marshal

Consider Using New Flameless Candles

Coan urged consumers to consider using the new flameless candles that give the same ambiance but are much safer.

Fire Marshal Coan recommends these candle safety tips:

- ◆ Burn candles in the center of a 1-foot **Circle of Safety**, free of anything that can burn.
- ◆ Stay in the same room with burning candles; do not leave unattended.
- ◆ Burn candles on a non-combustible surface such as a ceramic saucer, or plate.
- ◆ Be sure to snuff out candles before falling asleep, going out, or leaving the room.
- ◆ Teach everyone in the family the rules of safe candle use.
- ◆ Keep candles out of reach of small children and pets.

For additional information on candle safety, contact your local fire department or visit the Department of Fire Services web page at www.mass.gov/dfs and click on *Fire Safety Topics* and *Candle Fire Safety*, or contact the in the Fire Data and Public Education Unit at 1-877-9 NO-FIRE.

Some recent fires involving candles:

- On December 1, 2007, shortly after 10 p.m., Clinton firefighters responded to a fire in a one-family home. The fire started when candles were left burning unattended on a windowsill after the occupant went to bed for the night.
- On November 26, 2007, at 1:29 p.m., the Uxbridge Fire Department was called to a candle fire in a two-family home. The owner lit several candles in the living room before leaving to go shopping. One of the candles ignited some of the many combustibles near it and the sofa. There were no injuries associated with this fire because no one was home at the time of the fire. Damages were limited to the sofa and the living room.
- On April 24, 2007, at 2:34 p.m., the Situate Fire Department was called to a candle fire in a single-family home. The homeowner had left a candle burning for several hours unattended in the kitchen. No one was injured at this fire. Smoke detectors were operating. Damages from this fire were estimated to be \$350,000.
- On February 24, 2007, the Boston Fire Department was called to a fatal candle fire at 5:16 a.m. There was a power outage the night before and the occupants were using candles for light. They forgot to extinguish the candles before they went to bed. The candle in the bedroom started the fire that killed two of the college students and severely injured a third. Smoke detectors were present but failed to operate because of the power outage. This fire started two exposure fires and caused \$1 million in total damages to the three buildings.
- On January 9, 2007, at 11:47 a.m., the Boston Fire Department was called to a candle fire in a two-family home. The candle ignited a non-upholstered chair on the first floor. No one was injured in this fire, but damages were estimated to be \$800,000. It was undetermined if smoke detectors were present.
- On January 15, 2007, at 8:23 p.m., the Templeton Fire Department was called to a candle fire in a single-family home. A candle in a first floor hallway started the fire. No one was injured at this fire and smoke detectors were operating. Damages from this fire were estimated to be \$220,000.